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RANDOLPH, ARMY'S PRIDE

By J. M. SHULMAN

IT can be said of a good many flying fields and airports in the United States that they "just happened", in the sense that their initial state was hardly more than that of being large pieces of pasture land from which the cows were more or less suddenly evicted to make way for the dubitable early flying machine. Along with the aviation industry, some of them "just grew" until the lack of earlier planning manifested itself. Some turned out to be in poor locations with little or no allowance for proper expansion; some turned out to be poorly laid out, possibly because of a bad start; in one particular case the ultimate of bad conditions was an automobile highway cutting directly across one of the main runways.

Not so is the case of the number-one flying field of the United States Army, the world's greatest aviation training center, Randolph Field, Texas. This place is an example of the other extreme; a result of the most careful planning possible in advance.

Eleven years ago Randolph Field was a plan drafted by far-seeing individuals of the War Department and drawn up as a bill before Congress. Long recognizing a need for a training center for army fliers, Congress authorized in July, 1927, the establishment of such a center. In view of the large amount of land already owned by the government, it was decided not to purchase additional land for this purpose, so the selection of a site was left open to invitations on the part of various cities. After much consideration and investigation, the offer of a site sixteen miles northeast of San Antonio was accepted. The task of commencing work was placed under the command of Brigadier General Frank P. Lahm, under the title of Commanding General, Air Corps Training Center. Just ten years ago this November the actual work of construction was begun.

Today Randolph Field operates as an aviation training center unexcelled in magnitude and efficiency, and is aptly termed the "West Point of the Air". More than 1100 students are turned out annually for advanced flying work at other army fields.

Randolph Field must be seen to be fully appreciated. It is designed not only as a flying field but as a complete small city within itself, with more than 250 buildings, more than 18 miles of road, 12 miles of water mains, 11 miles of sewer mains and 10 miles of gas lines. Total area of the field is over 2360 acres, more than 485 acres of which are within the building area in the center. The population of the field exceeds 5000, of which 2700 are military personnel.

To get some idea of the field layout, picture if you can a rectangular area of strikingly beautiful buildings,

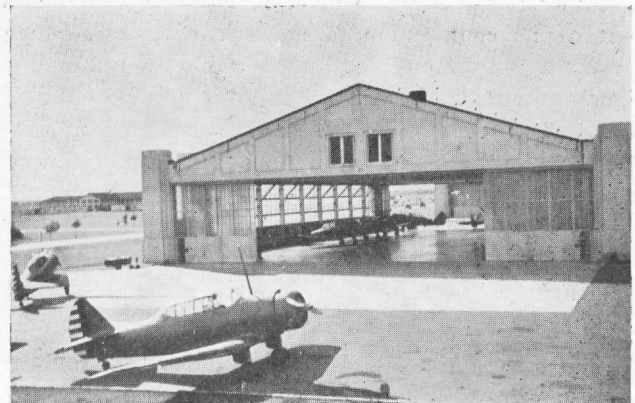
approached by a main road from the north and flanked on the east and west by long rows of huge hangars covering over half an acre each. Along the outer side of each row of hangars is a wide concrete ramp, and beyond each ramp a field so vast that an airplane could take off, rise hundreds of feet into the air, and land again without reaching the extremities. The west field is the primary (beginning) field, and the east field is used for basic (more advanced) flying.

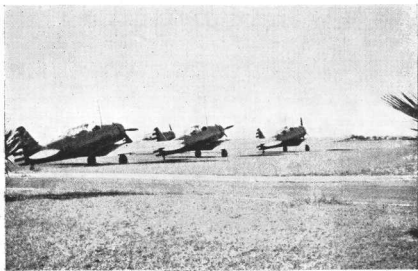
The unusual design of having the building area between two fields makes either field relatively near any building in the area, and at the same time provides adequate accommodations for the great number of planes on the field. Additional advantages claimed for this type of field are that a clear field is provided irrespective of wind direction, it is possible to get ships from the hangars in the safest and most efficient manner possible with taxing reduced to a minimum, and the maintenance operations and school activities are more concentrated with resulting economy of effort and transportation.

In general appearance, the building area of the field is not unlike a modern suburban section of a large southern city. Most of the buildings other than the school buildings, student quarters and barracks, are officers' homes. Athletic and recreational facilities abound; there are four outdoor swimming pools and numerous tennis courts and athletic fields.

On a clear, hot afternoon last July the writer watched from the ramp of the basic training field at Randolph the flying spectacle which has cost Uncle Sam more than \$25,000,000 to make possible. Dozens of trim army training ships were continuously taking off, sweeping out in large counter-clockwise circles, and making landings. There were so many ships in the air over the field, that it took a full realization of the

Randolph's Newest Hangar





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enormous size of the field to appreciate the fact that none of them was getting in the way of any other. The maneuvering seemed to take place with the smoothness of a gigantic machine running in perfect order.

At five o'clock the scene altered. The planes upon landing began to pull up onto the ramp, and within five minutes the ramp, eleven hangars in length, was dotted with them. The sight of the ramp as a color combination of yellow wings, blue fuselages, green grass and white concrete was an unforgettable one. Within ten more minutes waiting mechanics had pushed most of the ships into hangars and were attacking them from nose to tail.

How hard is it to get an appointment to Randolph Field? This question seems always to be of interest to many college students, since such an appointment is not only an honor and distinction, but means a profession and a career. A minimum of two years' college credit is a first requirement for admission. In addition an applicant must pass an extremely rigid physical examination, and this requirement is a stumbling block which accounts for a large number of rejection stories for every acceptance story.

A personal acquaintance of the writer is a recent graduate of the University of Alabama with a degree in aeronautical engineering, employed as a design draftsman by a commercial airline in Chicago. His background for flying is everything that could be desired, his whole heart is in it, and it has been his ambition for years to obtain an appointment to Randolph. Twice he has taken the physical examination and twice he has been rejected, not because of eyesight or hearing or any other such apparent cause, but for the one and only reason that he has two less than the required number of natural teeth; otherwise he is physically perfect.

This is a striking illustration of the degree of care exercised in accepting applicants for admission to Randolph; moreover, it is not altogether an extreme case. With such selection, the Army Air Corps gets and trains only the cream of what is available, insuring that future pilots of American military and civil aviation will be the best that the best of training can produce.